Lung Cancer Singapore – Overview, Symptoms & Treatment Guide

Lung cancer is one of the most common and serious cancers in Singapore. It occurs when abnormal cells in the lungs grow uncontrollably and can spread to other parts of the body. In Singapore, lung cancer remains a leading cause of cancer-related deaths, especially because it is often detected at a later stage when symptoms become noticeable.

Understanding lung cancer, its symptoms, and treatment options available in Singapore is important for early detection and better survival outcomes.

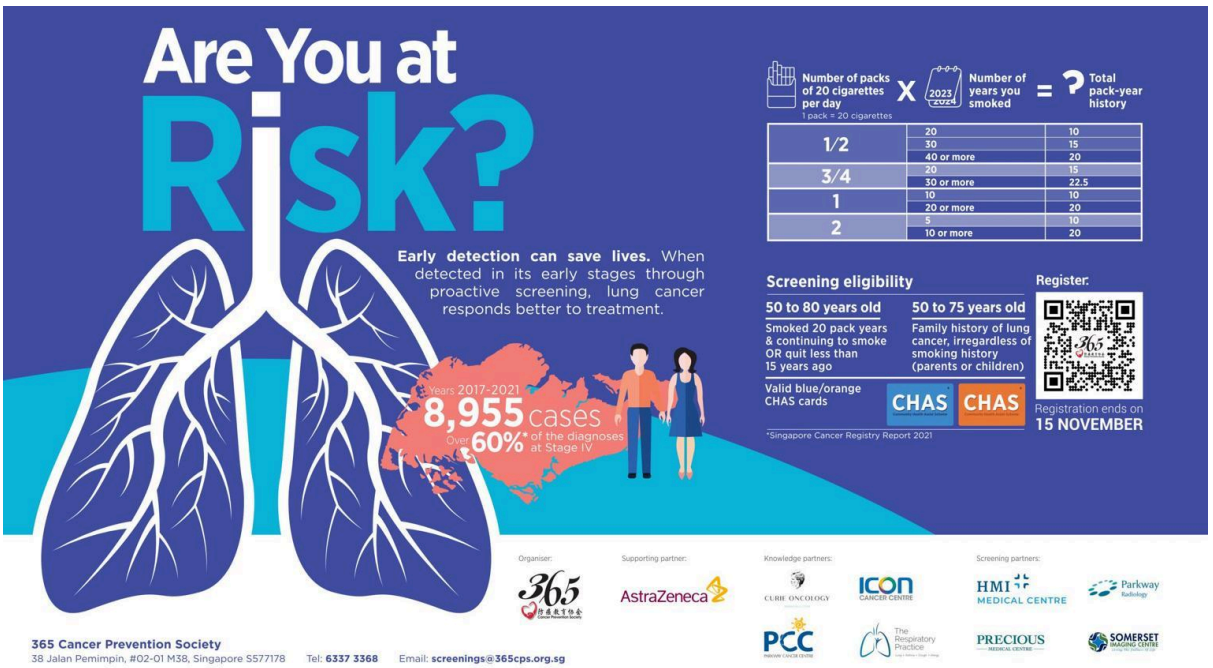
What is Lung Cancer?

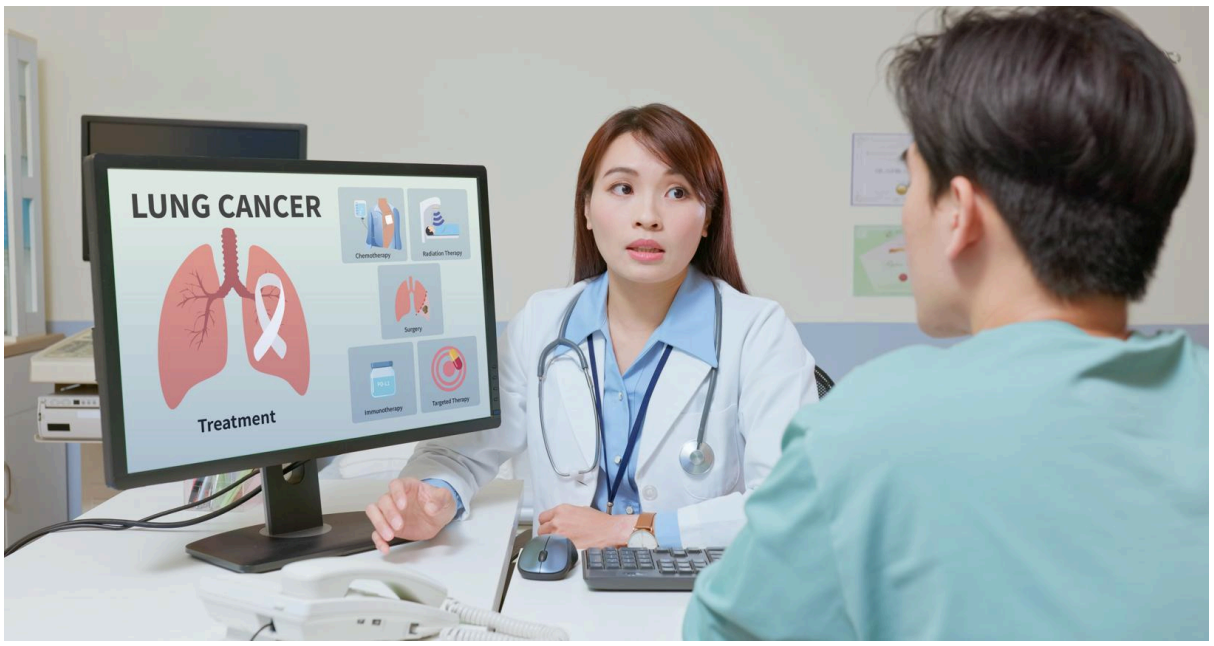
Lung cancer starts in the tissues of the lungs, usually in the cells lining the air passages. There are two main types:

- Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) – the most common type
- Small cell lung cancer (SCLC) – more aggressive and spreads quickly

It can spread to lymph nodes, liver, bones, brain, and other organs if not treated early.

Lung Cancer Situation in Singapore


Are You at Risk?
Early detection can save lives. When detected in its early stages through proactive screening, lung cancer responds better to treatment.
Years 2017-2021
8,955 cases
Over 60%* of the diagnoses at Stage IV
Number of packs of 20 cigarettes per day
1 pack = 20 cigarettes
X
2023
Number of years you smoked
= ?
Total pack-year history
1/2 | 20 | 10
30 | 15
40 or more | 20
3/4 | 20 | 15
30 or more | 22.5
1 | 10 | 10
20 or more | 20
2 | 5 | 10
10 or more | 20
Screening eligibility
50 to 80 years old
Smoked 20 pack years & continuing to smoke OR quit less than 15 years ago
50 to 75 years old
Family history of lung cancer, irregardless of smoking history (parents or children)
Valid blue/orange CHAS cards
CHAS
CHAS
*Singapore Cancer Registry Report 2021
Register.
Registration ends on
15 NOVEMBER
Organiser:
Supporting partner:
AstraZeneca
Knowledge partners:
CURIE ONCOLOGY
ICON CANCER CENTRE
PCC
The Respiratory Practice
Screening partners:
HMI MEDICAL CENTRE
Parkway Radiology
PRECIOUS
SOMERSET IMAGING CENTRE
365 Cancer Prevention Society
38 Jalan Pemimpin, #02-01 M38, Singapore S577178
Tel: 6337 3368
Email: screenings@365cps.org.sg



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Lung cancer is among the top cancers affecting both men and women in Singapore. It is also one of the leading causes of cancer deaths because many cases are diagnosed at advanced stages.

A major challenge is that early-stage lung cancer often shows no clear symptoms, making regular screening and awareness very important.

Causes and Risk Factors

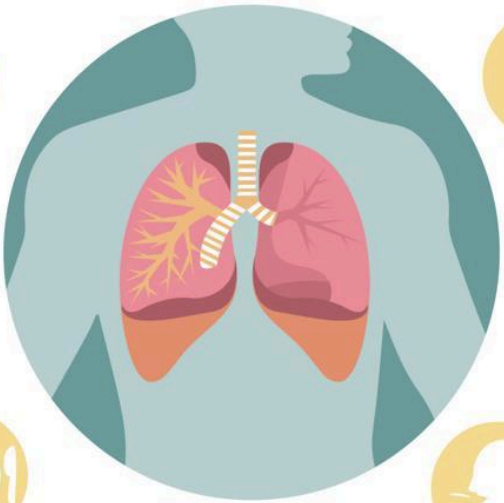
Several factors increase the risk of lung cancer, including:

- Smoking (the biggest risk factor)
- Second-hand smoke exposure
- Air pollution
- Exposure to chemicals like asbestos or radon
- Family history of lung cancer
- Age above 40–50 years

Even non-smokers can develop lung cancer, especially due to genetic factors or environmental exposure.

Symptoms of Lung Cancer in Singapore

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF LUNG CANCER



BRONCHITIS AND PNEUMONIA THAT DON'T GO AWAY OR KEEP COMING BACK

CHEST PAIN THAT IS WORSE WITH DEEP BREATHING, COUGHING, OR LAUGHING

NEW ONSET OF WHEEZING

FEELING TIRED OR WEAK

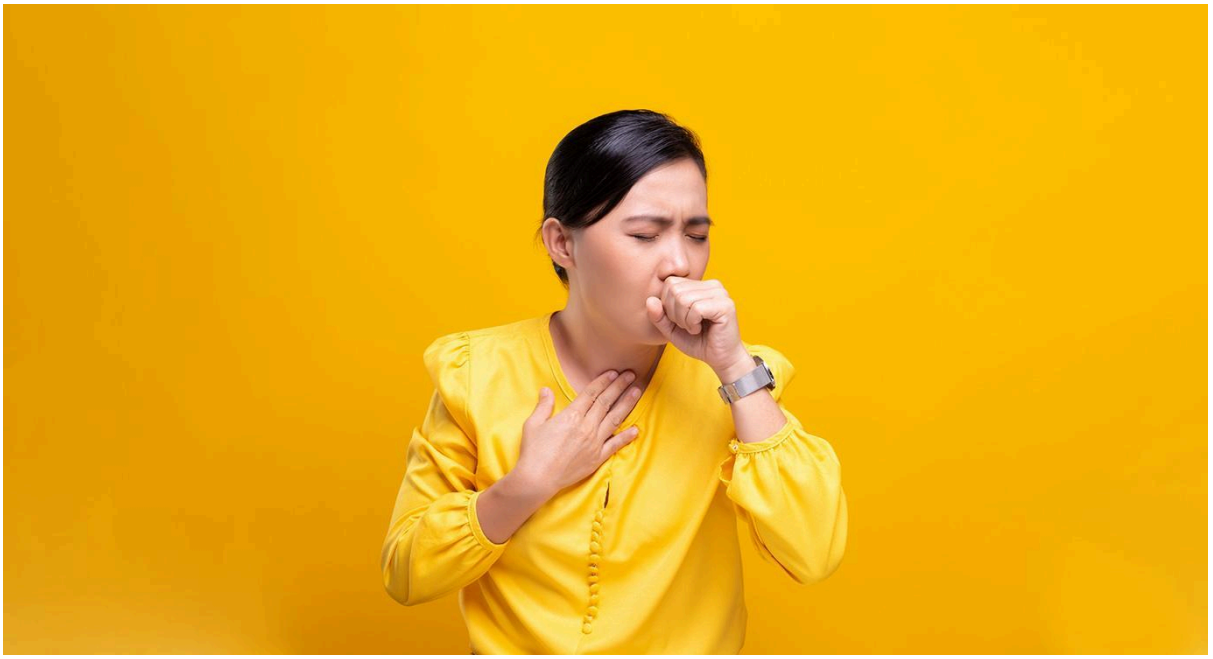
SHORTNESS OF BREATH

HOARSENESS

WEIGHT LOSS AND LOSS OF APPETITE

A COUGH THAT DOES NOT GO AWAY OR GETS WORSE

COUGHING UP BLOOD ORRUST-COLORED SPUTUM (SPIT OR PHLEGM)



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In many cases, early lung cancer does not show symptoms. When symptoms appear, they often include:

1. Persistent Cough

A cough that does not go away or keeps getting worse over time.

2. Coughing Blood

Blood in sputum (phlegm) is a serious warning sign.

3. Shortness of Breath

Difficulty breathing or feeling breathless during normal activities.

4. Chest Pain

Constant or worsening chest discomfort, especially while breathing or coughing.

5. Unexplained Weight Loss

Sudden weight loss without diet changes.

6. Fatigue and Weakness

Constant tiredness and low energy levels.

7. Repeated Chest Infections

Frequent bronchitis or pneumonia-like infections.

These symptoms usually appear when cancer has already progressed, which is why early screening is important.

Diagnosis of Lung Cancer

Doctors in Singapore use advanced methods for detection, such as:

- Chest X-ray
- CT scan
- Sputum analysis
- Bronchoscopy
- Biopsy tests

CT scans are especially important for detecting lung tumors early and understanding the stage of cancer.

Treatment Options in Singapore

Treatment depends on the type and stage of lung cancer. Common options include:

1. Surgery

Removal of the tumour or part of the lung in early-stage cases.

2. Chemotherapy

Drugs that kill or slow down cancer cells.

3. Radiotherapy

High-energy radiation used to destroy cancer cells.

4. Targeted Therapy

Drugs that target specific cancer cell mutations.

5. Immunotherapy

Helps the body’s immune system fight cancer cells more effectively.

Singapore’s hospitals use a multidisciplinary approach, where specialists work together to create personalized treatment plans.

Importance of Early Detection

Early detection greatly improves survival rates. However, many patients in Singapore are diagnosed only at advanced stages because early symptoms are mild or absent. Regular screening, especially for high-risk individuals, plays a crucial role in improving outcomes.

Conclusion

Lung cancer is a serious health condition in Singapore, but modern medicine offers advanced diagnostic tools and effective treatments. Awareness of symptoms like persistent cough, chest pain, and breathlessness can help in early detection. Combined with regular screening and timely medical consultation, survival rates can be significantly improved.

Early action saves lives, and understanding lung cancer is the first step toward prevention and effective treatment.